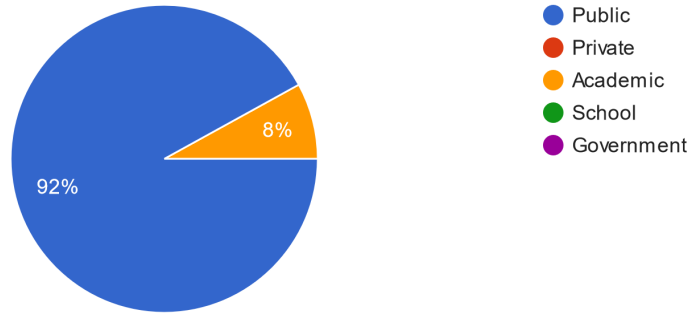


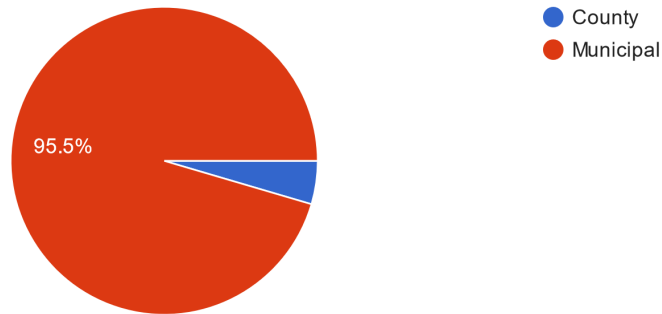
New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Type of Library
50 responses



92% Public Libraries (46 Respondents)
8% Academic (4 Respondents)

If library is public, is it:
44 responses

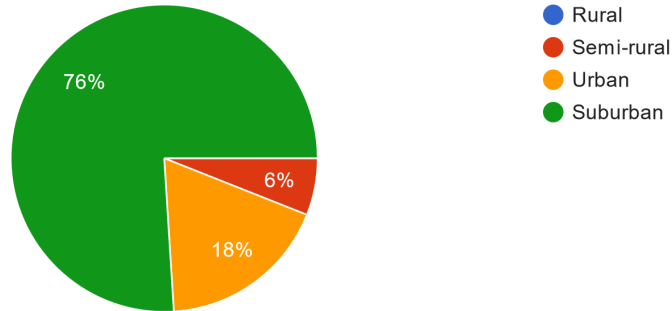


95.5% Municipal Libraries (42 Respondents)
4.5% County (2 Respondents)

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

How would you identify your community?

50 responses



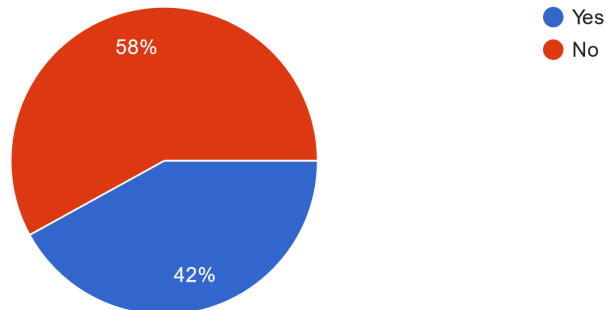
76% Suburban (38 Respondents)

18% Urban (9 Respondents)

6% Semi-rural (3 Respondents)

Is your library Fine Free?

50 responses



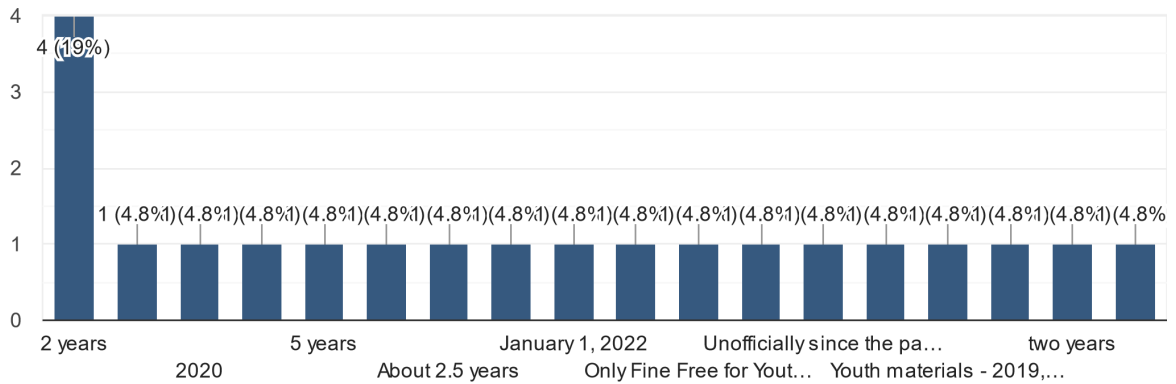
58% No (29 Respondents)

42% Yes (21 Respondents)

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

How long as your library been Fine Free?

21 responses



What prompted your library to go Fine Free?

20 responses

Analysis

The majority of the responses mentioned the **reduction of barriers to access** as a strong motivator for their library to go fine-free. **50%** of participants in this survey directly mentioned reducing barriers to access in their responses (n=20).

- Library staff felt uncomfortable charging fines to patrons who are economically disadvantaged, especially during the (ongoing) pandemic.
- The pandemic prompted **15%** of the responding libraries to go fine free.
- **20%** of respondents indicated that fines can have a punitive effect on patrons that is unwelcoming.
- Overall, the return on investment was worth the loss of fine revenue – patrons are happier and have one less thing to worry about as library users.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Notable Quote:

“Fines are contrary to the mission of the library; there are more effective ways to ensure the timely return of materials; fines have a disproportionate effect on the youth and economically disadvantaged people”.

Responses

We didn't want to penalize those with large overdue fines - especially children.

It was an effort to promote equitable service and reduce barriers to access

We felt as though it was a barrier to children and teens checking out materials. Most likely, it is not the fault of the children that their books are late since they are not the one driving to the library. We didn't want any kids to stop having access to books or a love of reading because their parents didn't want to accrue fines.

Reduce barriers to borrowing. Although most of our community members can pay fines, becoming "delinquent" is a negative experience. Also, life has been hard for the past two years - let's provide a fully positive service.

Barriers to student success, especially for financially challenged students. Also, we didn't use that money for anything (it wasn't part of our budget), so we didn't actually need it.

Fines are contrary to the mission of the library; there are more effective ways to ensure the timely return of materials; fines have a disproportionate effect on the youth and economically disadvantaged people.

We knew that fine free was the right thing to do, it unfairly punishes people who need libraries the most for using them. However, it was the pandemic that finally gave us the push to do the right thing and go fine free. Why burden people with fines when they have other worries.

public relations

Debate about access to information and resources being free and equal to the community.

We started with the Children's Dept. first as a way to relieve the stress of fines on children and young families. Later phased it in for adults as well.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Fine income is paltry. Studies show eliminating fines = eliminating barriers = more circ/more use

Pandemic at first, then we decided not to go back

Return on investment is very high - happy patrons!

Reducing barriers to patron access of library materials and information.

we stopped charging fines due to the pandemic shutdown and just kept it in place. Our board approved making it a permanent change in December 2021.

Success in the fine free trial, and getting the full board support

Equity and access - Fines heavily affect low-income families, creating barriers for the patrons who most need access to the library resources.

We were becoming increasingly uncomfortable fining the people who pay for the materials.

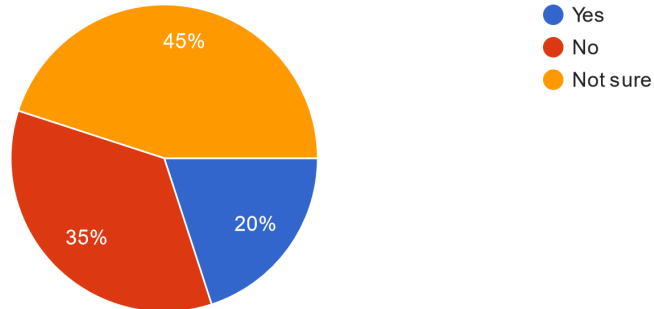
enough of a financial burden on students, want to not punish them but to inspire them to read and use library resources

The pandemic, the dialogue around going fine free within the field, to remove barriers and create more access to information.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Have you seen an increase in circulation?

20 responses



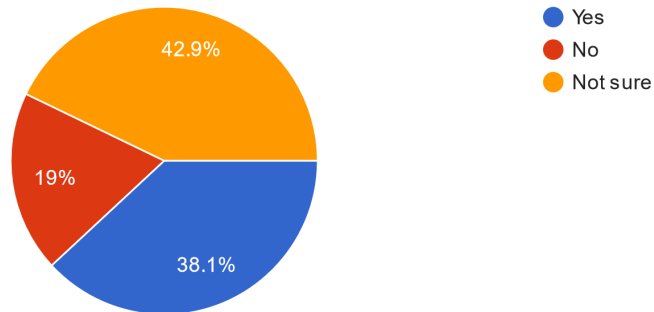
20% Yes (4 Respondents)

35% No (7 Respondents)

45% Not Sure (9 Respondents)

Have you seen an increase in library card membership?

21 responses



38.1% Yes (8 Respondents)

19% No (4 Respondents)

42.9% Not Sure (9 Respondents)

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

What ways have your budget been impacted since going Fine Free?

19 responses

Analysis

When asked “What ways have your budget been impacted since going Fine Free?” of those who answered:

- 47% of respondents indicated that going fine-free had no impact on their library’s budget.
- 21% of respondents indicated that going fine-free had a small or insignificant impact on their library’s budget.
- 11% of respondents indicated that going fine free had a moderate impact on their library’s budget.
- 21% of respondents indicated that they are unsure of the budgetary effects of going fine-free.

Based on the survey responses, the removal of fines did not significantly impact their respective library budgets.

- Fine payment revenue made up a very small portion of the budget for the majority of the respondents.
- Fine payment revenue decreased in many libraries due to the pandemic (prior to going fine-free).
- The removal of a significant barrier to access (fines) mitigated the loss of fine revenue.

Responses

No impact

There has been no major fiscal impact

We did lose revenue from the fines on the Juvenile and YA books. It was not significant enough to make us unable to go forward with our plan of offering fine free access to books for kids and teens. We have a very active Friends of the Library who raises money through frequent book sales. This definitely helped us mitigate the loss of fine revenue.

Pre-pandemic we collected about 20,000 in fines. We will likely collect 1,000 this year (fees associated with other libraries' items returned to us).

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

It has not, which was a large driver of doing it in the first place!

Fines were never a part of our overall budget.

We will live without the \$4,000/yr we got from fines. No big deal.

minimal. regarding the questions about increases in circulation and card membership, i cannot say that fine free is "the" variable or even a contributing variable, but this library has seen increases in circ and membership.

Nothing at this point. We prepared our 2022 budget knowing we would no longer have our fines income.

Unsure

Not too harshly

We had been preparing for this, so it had little impact.

not sure, but I don't think there was a significant impact because fine payments only made up less than 1% of our library's budget.

The money we had been collecting in fines had been decreasing over the years due to the shift from physical circulation to digital so it became easier to zero out that budget line.

Not at all

I don't think there has been an impact to our budget.

It has been difficult to judge because up until 2022, we stopped charging for anything through the pandemic to help people out.

none. the collection of fines did not have a big impact on our budget to begin with.

It has not; income from fines is supplemental income to us, we do not rely on it. Income from fines was steadily decreasing prior to the pandemic anyway.

As for the prior two questions about circulation and membership, it is too soon to tell if there have been increases.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

What benefits to your community have you seen since going Fine Free?

19 responses

Removes a barrier

Enhanced interactions with patrons- it has created a more positive library experience.

Parents are so relieved. If the books are a month overdue they will be charged for the cost of replacing the book. Once that book is brought back, though, the lost book fee is waived. We have not found that it makes children or teens any less responsible with their library items. It makes teens less hesitant to talk to us about books they have out since they don't have the fear of being hit with a giant fine they can't pay. If a card is blocked (fines are over \$10, usually for lost book fees) we are able to say, just find those books under your bed and return them and then you can get more. It gives them an easier solution than not being able to check out more items until they pay.

Better overall customer experience

Students feel less intimidation about using the library and possibly doing something "wrong"

It's too soon to tell. We had been fines free since March 16, 2020 because of the pandemic. We became officially fines-free independent of the pandemic, but at this stage, where traditional circulation is still recovering to pre-pandemic levels, it's impossible to say what effect it's had. Customers are very happy with the change.

Much happier patrons. People appreciate the "freedom" of not having to worry about a petty \$0.25 fine for an overdue book.

positive relations

Public Relations, Good will, also we now make it easier for school age children not to worry about getting fines.

More welcoming atmosphere. No tension/apprehension between staff and patrons about fines.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

People don't argue over a quarter

Happy patrons!

Many overdue books were returned!

We have heard anecdotally that some people will start using the library again. We are still in the process of clearing out old fines and fees.

good will. members are so thrilled about this

We welcomed back many patrons for whom fines had become a barrier.

It feels like we have a better relationship with people when asking for return of overdue materials. They seem grateful and surprised when we tell them that there are no fine due.

Much happier staff not having to "collect" from students or have to tell students they couldn't check out materials until they "paid up"

Going fine free creates access, removes barriers and shows the community that we have their information needs at the forefront of our mission; and that we are not here to inflict punishment or collect your money. Fewer uncomfortable conversations between staff and patrons and hopefully better customer experience overall. Patron retention and removing shame associated with government services and books.

Has going Fine Free helped commit the library to equity? How so?

15 responses

Of the 15 responses, 13 libraries agreed that going fine free helped commit the library to equity. Some of the ways listed were:

- Going fine free removed barriers and risks such as prohibitive fine payments for children, low income, and challenged users.
- Going fine free has increased access to materials and services for everyone in the community regardless of their economic or social situation.
- Going fine free has offered equal access to print and digital materials for everyone in the community regardless of your ability to pay fines.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

What would you tell other libraries that are considering going Fine Free?

16 responses

We are not a good example. Shortly after going fine free we were evicted from our building and didn't get a temporary location un 11/20. We are still in a temporary location.

Books will come back late. Usually we see books come in 3-7 dates after the due date. This doesn't affect our circulation too much and it removes so much stress from kids and parents. We have seen some patrons take advantage and keep items out for weeks, but that is not the norm.

To think about whether there is a logical reason for having fines, or is it just because that's how things have always been done. We didn't use the money for anything, but even if a library does include that money in their budget, maybe it can come from somewhere else instead of from patrons.

Look at the data. It works.

Do it.

do it. the goodwill is worth the lost revenue. most of our "issues" were with fines. this eliminated that friction. NOTE: Lost items are still billed at replacement cost.

Go for it! Fines are a small part of your overall budget.

Improves community relations. Makes the library a more welcoming place for some. Simplifies transactions between staff and patrons and reduces conflict.

There will be fewer arguments with patrons

Do it!!! You won't regret it.

That it reduces barriers to access and increases patron usage of the library. It is the equitable and fair thing to do. Also, going fine free does not impact the library's budget as much as you would think!

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

We have not seen any significant change in items being returned late. Consider implementing Automatic Renewals as a first step.

Do it!

It's a win win.

I say, do it. Times are changing for libraries in general. Lots of good will.

You will not regret it. We are not here to teach folks lessons or penalize them. If you rely on income from fines, perhaps it is time to explore new sources of funding - Friends groups, foundations, grants, donations, etc. These new explorations in finding funding are usually really positive - you'll build community relationships and/or discover a new service that you hadn't considered before from a grant opportunity.

How could libraries approach the topic with their boards, users, and local government? 12 responses

We provided our board with a lot of articles from national journals, lists of other libraries that have done it, statistics, how much money would really be lost, how it could be recouped.

Use data from local and national studies related to fine free policies.

We do still have fines for recalls, so that could assuage any concern that eliminating fines will prevent books from being widely shared.

Start by turning on the automatic renewal feature, if you have it available. Ask to go fines free for children's materials, use the data you gather from this to justify going all the way.

Fines should not be the basis of balancing budgets.

Improves community relations. Makes the library a more welcoming place for some. Simplifies transactions between staff and patrons and reduces conflict.

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Show ways in which the funds from fines can be made up in other areas of the collection.

Same as above, with more of a focus on how insignificantly the library budget will be affected.

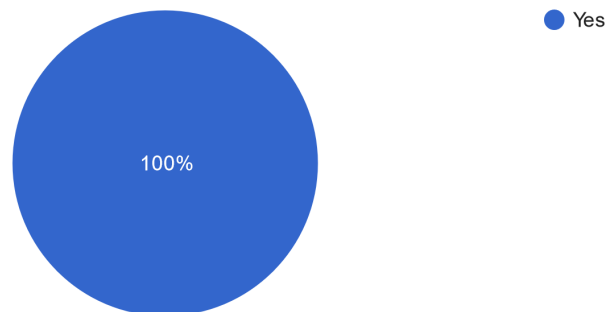
The money libraries collect in fines doesn't show that the fines are making people return things on time. People who can afford the late fees will pay them and keep using the library. People who can't afford the fees will stop using the library.

look to national trends!

Sharing success and stories.

It likely starts with administration approaching their boards about it, though it could be the other way around. Ask your fellow directors what data they used to make a case, cite the many articles that have been written, share webinars with your board and mayor/council. Give a brief presentation or make a video. Users could complete a survey, though I imagine most folks would support the move to eliminate fines.

The information you shared will assist the Diversity, and Outreach Section create a Free Fine Toolkit for New Jersey Libraries. Since the data from thi...acknowledged that you have granted us permission.
20 responses



Regional Breakdown: 49 responses, 21 of which are Fine Free

Northern NJ = 21 libraries/ Central NJ = 18 libraries/ Southern NJ = 10 libraries

Fine Free: Northern NJ = 10 libraries/ Central NJ = 7 libraries/ Southern NJ = 4 libraries

<u>Northern</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Southern</u>
Louis Bay 2nd Library (Hawthorne, NJ)	Union County College	Haddon Heights Library

New Jersey Fine Free Libraries- Summary Report - 50 Total Responses

Livingston	Cranbury Public Library	Cherry Hill Public Library
Wyckoff Public Library	Clark Public Library	Ocean City Free Public Library
Madison Public Library	Iselin Branch Library - Woodbridge Public Library	Deptford Free Public Library
Ringwood Public Library	Somerset County Library System	Camden County Library System
Parsippany-Troy Hills Public Library System	Edison Public Library	Willingboro Public Library
Millburn	South Brunswick Public Library	Mount Laurel Library
Roxbury Public Library	Asbury Park Public Library	Gloucester City Library
Felician University Library	Bernardsville Public Library	Runnemede Public Library
Millville Public Library	Red Bank Public Library	Collingswood Public Library
Closter Public	Keyport Free Public Library	
Secaucus Public Library	Matawan Aberdeen Public Library	
Hoboken Public Library	Holland Free Public Library	
Clifton Public Library	Bernards Township Library	
Elizabeth Public Library	Kenilworth Public Library	
Maplewood Memorial Library	Middletown Township Public Library	
Caldwell Public Library	Evelyn S. Field Library at Raritan Valley Community College	
Sparta Library	Piscataway	
Berkeley College Library		
Whippanong Library		
Fairview Free Public Library		